Belaying the Inevitable: On Intellectual Collaboration in the Anthropocene

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Abstract: Humanity has entered an era of perennial wildfires, expanding floodplains, population displacement, and broken supply chains, giving rise to an urgent need to prepare current and future generations for radical contingencies. We argue that looking beyond one's own philosophical tradition is a key step in addressing such obstacles and intractably 'knotted' dilemmas. Inheritors of Euro-modernity must find new ways of engaging perspectives and lifeways that have been coercively displaced by the very modernising forces that now imperil the viability of all human societies—not least of all because this fosters epistemic humility in thinking otherwise and learning from other sources. We elaborate one such model of cross-cultural engagement as a 'braided' philosophical encounter, by which overlaps and disagreements between traditions can be thematised without merging discourses, and the possibility of irresolvable contradiction can be acknowledged (Allard-Tremblay, 2022). Such an approach chimes with what James Tully (Kirloskar-Steinbach et al, 2024) describes as the needful 'de-parochialisation' of Western political theory, and what Amy Allen (2016) identifies as the goal of unlearning taken-for-granted socio-cultural ideals and practices. This leads to another metaphorical procedure, philosophical 'belaying,' In its non-metaphorical capacity, belaying is a critical facet of mountaineering safety, whereby two partners (the climber and the belayer) mitigate the danger of falling by deploying carefully orchestrated tension and friction through a series of hitches and anchors. In this way, the belayer supports the climber with minimal force and reduces the risk of sudden and complete collapse. Once the climber reaches safety, the roles can be switched, enabling the belayer to climb to the next stage with the same process of tension, friction, and support. In both cases, the goal is to facilitate new self-understandings and unexpected constellations of ideas from within one's own philosophical perspective—asking why 'we' persist in conducting our research or teaching in the manner that 'we' do. Hence the (revised) title of this paper, 'belaying the inevitable,' which aims to capture the two elements at stake: a shift towards a collaborative model of intellectual practice more suited to maneuvering amid catastrophe; and the seemingly all-encompassing nature of the Anthropocene itself, whose effects enshroud all aspects of human experience.

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[1] This article reflects equal contributions by both authors and draws on shared insights, developed in conversation and in writing.

"Like an unskilled doctor, fallen ill, you lose heart and cannot discover by which remedies to cure your own disease."

– Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*

"La lutte elle-même vers les sommets suffit à remplir un cœur d'homme. Il faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux."

– Camus

Introduction

The world as human beings have known it for the past 10,000 years has, in all likelihood, come to an end. As such, the Anthropocene presents a radically different context of existence than the Holocene, for humans and other-than-humans.[2] We believe that this incipient time of perennial wildfires, expanding floodplains, population displacements, and broken supply chains gives rise to an urgent need to prepare current and future generations for radical contingencies. It does so by suspending any presumption that intellectual labor and inquiry can carry on as before.

The Anthropocene amounts to much more than another problem to be treated as a passing fashion for philosophical critique. Firstly, because the Anthropocene itself can rightfully be seen as the culmination of Euro-modernity (H. Davis and Todd 2017) that places all precipitative sociocultural practices into question. Secondly, because the prevailing political and philosophical responses (e.g. eco-modernist solutions for climate change versus strategies of 'degrowth'; techno-utopian versus nihilistic visions of 'our' civilisational trajectory) appear stuck in intractable opposition. As the proverbial physician who cannot heal himself through his own ineffective cures, most existing 'solutions' to accelerated climate change betray the same pretensions toward technological, legislative, and ethical 'control' of nature and its contingencies. Too many proffered plans for climate melioration steamroll past ethical-existential disagreements with utilitarian calculus, disputative facts and logic, or the presumption of rational consensus (at least among those capable of seeing the problem 'the right way')[3] – thus consolidating their preferred tradition, generally through overly confident univocal epistemic practices. Not only do we doubt that the prevailing civilisational paradigm deserves our continuing faith, we believe maintaining its traditions and mythos inhibits the development of epistemic humility, as well as our openness to encounters and collaborations that strengthen our capacity to cope with dramatic, unexpected change. Coping with historical transformation means learning to embrace the discomfort of recognizing our own perspectives as incomplete and admitting the possibility of irresolvable disagreement. We call for a form of epistemic surrender that facilitates engagement across traditions–most especially for those who inhabit the dominant Euro-Modern tradition.

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[2] Although we acknowledge the recent decision by the International Union of Geological Sciences (March 2024) to reject the adoption of 'Anthropocene' as an official classification of the present as a distinct geological epoch, we side with the dissenting view (for example, Jan Zalasiewicz) that dismissing the admittedly speculative stratigraphic label (given it is still technically an emergent phenomenon) grants precious little clarity in return for inviting further denial and delay in addressing a genuinely (even if not 'geological') unprecedented 'event' in human history which harbours grave consequences for the future of our species.

[3] See, for example: (Parenti 2021; Heath 2021).

Specifically, we suggest working collaboratively 'outside' the surety of one's own philosophical tradition is a fruitful and necessary part of learning to live within the emergent state of existential uncertainty. Specifically, the collapse of the Holocene throws into relief the need to find new ways of engaging perspectives and lifeways that have been coercively displaced and disqualified by the very modernising forces that imperil the viability of all human societies.[4] Firstly, because it accepts that new and old intellectual resources contain multitudes, and are open to diverse and creative interpretations to make sense of our transforming world. Secondly, because this changing world is one where the borders and locales of states, nations, peoples and lifeways are radically challenged, if not completely broken asunder. Working collaboratively outside the surety of one's home tradition enacts a form of intellectual being-with capable of disrupting the atomizing and alienating effects of the Anthropocene era.

Our aim is to find a better way to grasp the seemingly ungraspable and find surer footing against eschatological despair. Our approach encompasses two metaphorical considerations: The first is philosophical 'braiding,' which Yann Allard-Tremblay has described as "a nonfoundationalist and nonreductivist method of engagement…that reveals overlaps and disagreements without merging the discourses, while acknowledging the possibility of irresolvable contradictions" (2022, 262). As with the distinct fibres and separate strands constituting the braid, the practice of braiding "reveals each strand as unique and important, yet it emphasises how a mutual engagement creates a stronger and more complete whole, without merging or erasing the distinct strands" (Allard-Tremblay 2022, 262). In seeking to further elucidate philosophical braiding, we have also been led to develop a supplemental metaphor that speaks to the need for more daring forms of intellectual engagement across traditions: philosophical 'belaying.' In its non-metaphorical capacity, belaying is a critical facet of mountaineering safety, whereby two partners (the climber and the belayer) mitigate the danger of falling by deploying carefully orchestrated tension and friction through a series of hitches and anchors. In this way, the belayer supports the climber with minimal force and reduces the risk of sudden and complete collapse. Once the climber reaches safety, the roles can be switched, enabling the belayer to climb to the next stage with the same process of tension, friction, and support.

Metaphors are not the same as demonstrative arguments, but they serve important heuristic and theoretical roles. We believe the image of the 'belaying' technique (despite neither author being themselves mountaineers) encapsulates our practice of collaborative critical theorizing: in order to face the formidable inevitability of climate upheaval, the stability of our civilisational-moral 'anchors' need to be tested, adjusted, and sometimes replaced. To otherwise insist on confronting the Anthropocene alone – and bound by the strictures of one's home traditions – seems folly. Hence the title of this paper, 'belaying the inevitable,' which aims to capture the two elements at stake: a shift towards a collaborative model of intellectual

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[4] There is no presumption of radical independence between these traditions. Traditions disqualified by Euro-modernity may have been influenced by it, just like Euro-modern traditions may have been influenced by these traditions. Nevertheless, they remain differently positioned in a global epistemic landscape marked by coloniality (Smith 2012; Mignolo 2021).

practice more suited to maneuvering amid catastrophe; and the seemingly all-encompassing nature of the Anthropocene itself, whose effects enshroud all aspects of human experience.

Our suggestive model for cooperative intellectual labor may not be unprecedented in design, but the context of its argument, a new era of climate-driven change across human societies and practices, offers a hopeful pathway for conducting and valuing intellectual practice in the face of existential uncertainty and upheaval. We begin this section by identifying certain tendencies we see inhibiting responsiveness to the Anthropocene. We argue that collaborations 'within,' and especially 'between' traditions, is required to offset potential pathological responses to ecological uncertainty. We will then introduce an alternative model for intellectual 'belaying,' contrasting this metaphorical process to other modes of cross-cultural engagement.

(1) Human (Intellectual) Labour in the Anthropocene

Although the accelerated change and stochastic patterning of Earth's climate is increasingly framed in apocalyptic terms, the thoroughgoing permanence of these effects are already grasped in social, personal, and spiritual domains. Climate change is not reducible to newsworthy bursts of chaos, like wildfires consuming vast expanses of land, rivers bursting their banks to swallow a city, or titanic glacial shelves collapsing into the sea. For human and other-than-humans animals alike, the climate crisis infuses daily interactions and practices with ominous portent and uncertainty (Stroud and Moore 2023). As seasonal shifts become deadly caricatures of what came before, we lose our confidence in planning for the future and evaluating life choices (H. Davis 2023; Wray 2022).

We do not need to emphatically acclaim the science of climate change (nor even accept the geological periodisation of the Anthropocene) to appreciate the ways human labour is already being forced to adapt to a manifold of new circumstances (Juárez and Lakhani 2024). Farmers and fruit growers in heat ravaged regions have already started switching to nighttime harvesting, in the hope that the risks of accidents and reduced yields does not outweigh the benefits of avoiding extreme temperatures (Tigue 2023); transportation drivers are being asked to gain an expanded skillset as situational meteorologists, given the rapidity with which new breeds of superstorms can wreck sudden havoc (Espiner 2024); and care workers are being deputised as emergency responders, in expectation that natural disasters will become more frequent and widespread, and will wholly outpace the response times of state authorities (Kutz 2022). Anthropogenic climate change exacerbates an already unjust division of labour, between those labouring outside and directly subject to climate effects versus those who can shelter within climate controlled structures (Nixon 2013). At the same time, the dangers are increasingly being experienced first-hand in the Global North, with superstorms, wildfires, and population displacement bursting the capillaries of global trade and shaking future projections about choosing a career, owning a home, and having children. Climate is changing the way we work and relate to one another; it is changing the meaning and purpose of subsistence and non-subsistence labour. What then becomes of academia when it can no longer present itself as an indispensable rite of passage into adulthood (having already lost,

for the humanities especially, any claim of providing a reliable means of upward social mobility and job security)? How do we establish a non-instrumental purpose for intellectual pursuits in the face of growing pressure to dedicate resources and energies to exigencies of climate change?

Among the branches of Western theory that foreground social critique, there is a taken-for-granted assumption that the 'job' of theory (both in teaching and in writing) must still include a careful, albeit critical, recapitulation of European philosophy and capitalist social modernity–even where the ultimate goal is to emancipate the thinking subject from the strictures and assumptions of this problematic legacy.[5] Critical reflexivity and a sound discursive apparatus are the fruits of this historical-philosophical progression, through which (Western) moral agents gradually conduct themselves 'more' ethically and responsively to human and non-human others. Such a task could be described as Sisyphean–if not wholly futile–considering the commitment to forever correcting and purging unwanted metaphysical and socio-cultural baggage, maintaining vigilance over emerging social pathologies, but all the while acknowledging an essential inability of theorising to enact necessary social change. The seeming quagmire in which many contemporary theories are caught has been sharply noted by thinkers from other traditions (Santos 2016, 19–46). Compounding the problem is the further ecological consideration that even the most purified discursive apparatus accumulates an unsupportable material presence through the ceaseless production and warehousing of drafts and data (Hodgkinson, Jackson, and Jackson 2023; Monserrate 2022).

The above description of the groundshifting, transformative moment for human labour in the Anthropocene is not intended as a prelude to an(other) ecological manifesto or inflationary reading of the need for philosophical novelty. We simply mean to articulate the need for pursuing intellectual work that is otherwise. If all prevailing cultural and institutional aspects of Euro-modernity are indeed under threat, we must assume this applies equally to the social form of intellectual life. This is what brings us to the present concern with changing the way Euro-modernity relates to its own history, and to other ways of thinking and being.

Intellectual labor is always conducted from within particular traditions, defined by complex ways of being, doing, and knowing through which reality is apprehended. They are constituted by sets of broadly shared considerations, insights, assumptions, practices and relationships. They operate through shared conceptual frameworks and methods, inscribed in

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[5] "[T]he Habermasian theory of modernity compels those of us who are the heirs of the European Enlightenment tradition to take the stance that we know or at least believe our form of life to be developmentally superior to those that we label pre- or non-modern, but that we are open to being proved otherwise, albeit in a dialogue to be conducted on our own terms. Such a stance places insuperable cognitive burdens on those who would aspire to engage in genuinely open intercultural dialogue across the colonial divide…Adorno and Foucault encourage critical theorists to enter into intercultural dialogue with subaltern subjects without presuming that we already know what the outcome of that dialogue should be, that is to say, with an openness to the very real possibility of unlearning." (Allen 2017, 202)

Unlearning is required because what was held to be 'knowledge,' was in fact a form of structurally mediated and insulated ignorance, as illustrated by the numerous discussions of colonial, settler and white ignorance (Sullivan and Tuana 2007; Vimalassery, Pegues, and Goldstein 2016; Mills 2017; E. Davis 2018; Meissner and Huebner 2022)

time and space, notably through significant historical figures, stories, narratives, or locales.[6] 'Working' within a tradition means elucidating its precepts, working out its intimations,[7] and applying these to new cases. But it can also mean engaging with these beliefs critically, in light of changing circumstances, while striving to uncover underappreciated insights and unacknowledged conceits.[8] Yet, even within pluralistic modern eras, sociocultural traditions can be seen to abide and predetermine what 'counts' as meaningful. And we do not need to assume a world-historical 'logic' when suggesting, for instance, that the liberal political tradition evinces a historical path dependency based on certain core assumptions: should critical engagement result in the jettisoning of values like personal autonomy or equality under the law, one would assume that something had gone seriously awry during discussion. Just as scientific breakthroughs triggering paradigm shifts tend to remain historically anomalous (Kuhn 2009), so too are the intellectual developments that overthrow (rather than discretely adjust and elaborate) the lifeways in which they are fostered.

If the Anthropocene heralds a 'new' era for Earth, we need to consider what a literal ground-shifting of reality entails. At a minimum, it suggests all human enterprises, including the intellectual work of pedagogy and critique, must be adapted to fit new circumstances.[9] We further contend that the exigencies of accelerated climate change do not diminish, but amplify the need for endeavours that are not reducible to bodily survival and subsistence. But how do 'we' (especially those who stand as inheritors of Euro-modernity) effect this transformation, given our tendency towards preserving 'democratic-liberal freedom' through institutional stability and intellectual mastery? How do we freely break into new forms of intellectual practice? And how do we do so without consolidating the dominance of Euro-Modern traditions, or travelling the well-worn pathways of romanticising the Other and casting all perspectives into relativistic seclusion? Here we turn briefly to consider the challenges of parochialism and the political dimensions of myth-making.

(2) On Cross-cultural Dialogue and Political Myth

In his most recent reflections upon the task of deparochializing political theory, James Tully (2023) notes a number of obstacles to genuine dialogue between traditions. These may include strategic or manipulative intentions underlying dialogue (p. 4); self-deception about one's own motivations for participating (p. 4); "ontological conditions of sense-making" that restrict engagements to the dogmatic confines of one's preferred tradition of understanding; and various other "psychological, military, economic, religious, rationalistic, political,

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[6] This has been formulated to avoid framing traditions as purely epistemological considerations or as purely matters of beliefs. We seek to emphasize how traditions can also be understood in onto-epistemological terms, as illustrated by Vanessa Watts (2013).

[7] The idea of working out the intimations of a tradition is a conceptualization of intellectual labor one of us draws from Micheal Oakeshott (1991, 57–58).

[8] For adaptive engagements with Indigenous traditions, see for instance (Borrows 2016, 11; Burkhart 2019, 86).

[9] Although, as Heather Davis and Zoe Todd (2017, 761) incisively point out, there "multiple Indigenous scholars who argue that the Anthropocene is not a new event, but is rather the continuation of practices of dispossession and genocide, coupled with a literal transformation of the environment, that have been at work for the last five hundred years."

face-saving" considerations that prevent us from abandoning accustomed conceptual spaces (Tully 2023, 4). Such obstacles can be further compounded by second-order justifications and group narratives–not to mention the burdensome and challenging practicalities of genuinely open and critical dialogue itself (Tully 2023, 6). Thus, traditions function as taken-for-granted "constitutive background features," whose existence and purpose remain more or less transparent to members but which may become 'foregrounded' through critique. Before pursuing the deparochializing of political theory, as it were, one must already be able to parochialize the tradition through which one apprehends the world and approaches one's interlocutor (Tully 2023, 11).

Genuinely reflexive and critical dialogues are difficult, as Tully notes, not just because of the aforementioned motivational difficulties, but because they have the capacity to unsettle stabilising features of our basic apprehension of the world (2023, 11). Undermining the authority and relevance of one's home tradition goes against the routinised norms of intellectual 'labor.' And, to the extent that 'we' academics work within a sociocultural tradition, we are buffered by conscious and implicit assumptions, and we rarely engage views that threaten what we take to be relevant and meaningful within our profession. Thus, while philosophers, sociologists, and political theorists ostensibly share a concern with the same social phenomena, they often pursue their investigations in their own esoteric dialects, intelligible mainly to their members, and in reference to the canonical figures native to their disciplines. And, through the hyper-specialised dialects of sub-disciplines, we contribute to the wider phenomenon of niche, self-referential discourses that remain indecipherable to one another, except as battlelines in a culture war (Millgram 2009). Interdisciplinary and pan-traditional dialogues are possible, but they are just as easily disincentivized by other institutional, pedagogical, and transmissive expectations.

What is criticizable and transformable within a tradition – and therefore subject to potentially disruptive collaborations across traditions – is further constrained by our fidelity to the tradition itself (and the need to preserve it for future generations). Consider for instance how anyone working within the Euro-Modern tradition (in university and research settings) is never merely an inheritor, but must act as a curator and defender of the intellectual *significance* of John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, or whoever one's preferred progenitor of Liberalism may be. Natural law theorists and communitarians, in turn, might dedicate themselves to the protective conservation of Aristotle or Aquinas. These figures are treated as *indispensable* reference points, what we refer to as sociocultural 'anchors,' for correctly intimating the insights and thought forms with which they become associated. Even for those who position themselves as radical critics of Enlightenment (be they Heideggarians or post-Marxist Critical Theorists), the grooves of tradition follow a delicately manicured narrative of generational inheritances, even when the inheritance is itself becoming unshackled from dogmatic precursors. To leave those grooves is to depart from normally recognizable and valued labor. Traditions that already predominate all-too-easily perpetuate through self-selected audiences and interlocutors. Rare are the opportunities for encountering radically different traditions on equal grounds, as we can always delve back into the diverse strands of the bounteous Western tradition to find

counterpoints and underappreciated nuances (one of the many benefits of enjoying a relatively intact historical culture). In contrast, when we consider various North-American Indigenous political traditions, the intellectual boundaries suddenly thicken. Despite differences between Wendat, Anishinaabe and Nuu-chah-nulth traditions (differences as broad as those between Hume and Kant, or Schopenhauer and Hegel), it is generally considered sufficient to minimise 'internal' distinctions and maximise divergences between Euro-Modern and Indigenous ways of thinking.[10] This presumed 'civilisational' divide makes the aim of a non-contestatory and genuinely collaborative encounter seem even more counterintuitive to the normal duties of intellectual work within a tradition–at least until it can be successfully classified and integrated into a recognisable school of 'comparative thought.'

There are further obstacles worth noting. There is the expectation that worldviews should be complete and coherent (and thereby subject to evaluation) in order to function. A tradition, insofar as we assume it enables our apprehension of the world, *should* have sufficient resources to negotiate unexpected aporias or emergent realities; and working through the intimations of a tradition *should not* lead us into contradictory and irreconcilable commitments. Presumptions of completeness and coherence deflate the urgency of our needing to engage with other traditions and lifeways, and cast doubt upon the utility of such engagements. The tautologous nature of tradition allows one to demur against taking incompatible beliefs or commitments seriously, given these simply are not (or no longer) 'our way' (for example, casting lots in the name of the goddess Fortuna has been displaced by the science of probability within the worldview of Euro-modernity; the persistence of such beliefs is now dismissed as folk superstition or psychological eccentricity).

Of course, the expected conduct of intellectual labor and obstacles to cross-cultural dialogue are just that: expectations and obstacles. They can and often are surmounted. We can also note recent and increasingly widespread acceptance of a need for such cross-cultural dialogue. This can be seen in projects of comparative political theorizing (Dallmayr 2004; March 2009; Ackerly and Bajpai 2017), of deparochialization of political thought (Williams 2020; Kirloskar-Steinbach and Kalmanson 2021), of dialogical and treaty approaches (Tully 2023; Sherwin 2022), of decolonization of philosophy and political theory (Mills 2015; Burkhart 2019; Mignolo 2021; Kirloskar-Steinbach 2023; Weir 2024), and of epistemic justice (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018; Posholi 2020; Tobi 2020; Mitova 2024) that all call in their distinct ways for greater engagements with and centering of traditions that have been othered, silenced, disqualified and destituted by dominant Euro-Modern ones.

For Tully, insisting upon the concrete locality of lifeways and upon interpersonal engagement (rather than an abstract public sphere) facilitates dialogues of comparative political thought to approach something like restorative epistemic justice (Tully 2023, 13). Although such considerations are highly relevant to theorizing dialogue across traditions, we are less

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[10] This is a worthwhile intellectual project but it should not be the only type of collaborative intellectual engagement across traditions that is pursued. Furthermore, while it is common to differentiate Indigenous and Euro-Modern traditions and while we believe that there are significant differences between them worth emphasizing, they should not be essentialized and reified, and neither should we presume the absence of any cross-influence.

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concerned with contexts in which 'reciprocal elucidation' and 'deep listening' (Tully 2023, 15) are recognised as inherently valuable practices. In pursuing philosophical braiding and belaying, our concern is not only to break with the monological model of enlightenment, but also to foreground the motivating factor of a failed social paradigm. Braiding and belaying, in the context of this article,[11] are presented as modes of intellectual engagement that arrive 'almost too late,' at moments when epistemic 'surrender' and abandonment of former socio-cultural 'anchors' is driven as much by unavoidable existential need as it is by any moral realisation. Prioritising the development of the immediate social relationship of dialogue over any subsequent heuristic or discursive apparatus reflects the reduced expectation of future 'posterity' and the increasing need to negotiate an epistemically and culturally fragmented aftermath. We suggest it may facilitate new ways of being-with in conditions of extreme alterity and may constitute new intellectual resources to better respond to the shifting predicaments of the incipient Anthropocene.

Here, Chiara Bottici's (2007; 2014) work on political 'myth' and imaginal politics provides another useful point of contrast with some expectations of what should be the outcome or product of multicultural dialogues. What Bottici refers to as the 'inherent plurality' of any mythological narrative (which contrasts with the rationalised *logos* of Christian theology) (Bottici 2007, 99), shares important similarities with some of the intellectual virtues we see in the elucidations of cross-cultural braiding. Mythological narratives can be host to multiple contradictory accounts of origins and fates (e.g. Odysseus makes it home to Ithaca in one account, while in another never returns; Skywoman falls through the hole left by the Tree of Life, in another version she is pushed or thrown). As with mythmaking, practices of braiding and belaying are not overly concerned with producing unified explanations and theories; they rather constitute vast repertoires of potentially contradictory and irreconcilable perspectives. As such, braiding and belaying can be understood as pursuing intellectual partnership for encountering the world as it is left to us, making sense of its complexity and plurality, and finding ways to respond – if only by accepting our impotence – to things seemingly beyond human control. The braid can be made and remade and new insights can be gained and new realities accounted for. Furthermore, as with myths, core normative insights can be interwoven (e.g., to incorporate moralistic readings of the hubris that hastened the undoing of Euro-Modernity). The main distinction lies in the temporal context: myths (especially 'political' myths) provide orientation and motivation for acting in concert toward some aim (Bottici 2007, 258), whereas braiding and belaying arrive not at the moment of mythic inception, but dissolution. They offer repertoires for finding one another and navigating together through the Anthropocenic dusk.

Furthermore, an argument can be made that the contemporary movement of Western politics tends to be centrifugal; even within reactionary populism, we see a tendency towards fragmentation into warring conspiratorial factions rather than coalescence around a charismatic hero (Niklasson 2023; Ball 2023; Falkenberg et al. 2022). In contrast,

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[11] This qualification is important because these approaches may also be motivated by other considerations. For instance, in his article, Allard-Tremblay presents braiding as an approach to learn from and engage with another context without presuming that contexts and perspectives can actually be merged into a unified theory.

philosophical braiding is an attempt to work out a respectful, yet constructive and critical exploration of discourses. The act of braiding itself, independently of the result, is politically productive of something otherwise. It expands the bounds of our political and intellectual relationships rather than confine us to the grooves of our inherited tradition. Indeed, what initiates the braiding of two or more strands is, firstly, the practical desire for each tradition not to be left 'stranded' in isolation and in the face of momentous historical upheaval. Secondly, each strand is respected in its authoritative distinctness, meaning that there is no need or expectation for one to be translated or incorporated in the other. It is this respectful act of being-with that enables a social bond to be created or preserved over and above the immediate products of engagement. Intellectual labor here is thus diverted from working out the intimations of one's tradition to the performative enactment of a relationality across traditions.

The need for such a method of engagement arose, in Allard-Tremblay's initial articulation, from the need to compare and contrast theories of change articulated in very different political and historical contexts that are nevertheless often seen and represented as familial, such as Canada and South Africa. What could it mean and what should it mean to compare theories of change articulated in these two contexts? Does it mean assessing the soundness of the views articulated by Nelson Mandela in his struggle to overthrow the Apartheid state? Does it mean evaluating the usefulness of Indigenous resurgence in the North American context? If so, who are 'we' to adopt the role of adjudicators? And how do members within those two contexts set about 'learning' from one another's emancipatory traditions without simply standing in judgement or absorbing their achievements into a global, unified theory of change? Furthermore, should we assume each tradition represents a stable viewpoint across time, or that its internal differences are less significant than its 'external' boundaries? When comparatively engaging traditions, it is often hard to avoid focusing on zones of conflict, and incommensurabilities between 'different' traditions. But traditions are themselves never simply univocal and uncontested – they are composed of different strands, including internally marginalized and critical perspectives. Ultimately, we see 'braiding' as soliciting cooperation across traditions; it seeks to complement this acceptance of divergence between traditions with the active exploration of resonances (both recognised and unexpected) and of the ways in which traditions may productively come sometimes closer together and sometimes further apart. It adopts an ethos of practical respect and of epistemic humility; it accepts that one needs others to appreciate the limits of one's own perspective. Through braiding, we engage the unfamiliar in a creatively 'disarming' and illuminating manner, serving the interests of all parties.

'Braiding' thus seeks to build a stronger bond through an engagement with inextricably linked yet distinct traditions–but in so doing, it could be said to be overly 'cautious.' This is because it engages only with already palatable, 'braidable' strands, that is, with aspects of other traditions that (while they may differ in important ways that may be unsettling) do not risk fundamentally disrupting one's home tradition. Furthermore, there is an expectation that through braiding one is attempting to produce some type of deliverable — a braid that combines various strands. Finally, while braiding disarms traditions by resituating them

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within a larger epistemic environment, it does not call for the yielding and relinquishing of one's home tradition or similarly fundamental transformations. On its own, this may not be an issue, but once we take into account the multisecular epistemic asymmetry of coloniality, it is well worth considering changing intellectual practices to disrupt sedimented[12] (if not altogether sclerosed and calcified) blockages that reconsolidate Euro-Modernity, and drive us closer towards the ecological abyss.

While similarly producing relations of being-with across traditions, 'belaying' has, in contrast to braiding, a more jaundiced view of the institutional and cultural resources for forging new collective 'myths' amid ecological coping. It is an operation best suited to work against the deep seated dynamics of appropriation and incorporation that tend to be deployed by hegemonic and dominant traditions, generally to avoid relinquishing mastery and significance. Indeed, braiding, as Allard-Tremblay (2022) suggests, is just one of a large and varied set of philosophical approaches that can be adopted by North American Indigenous thinkers, notably in their orientations to Euro-Modernity and to the settler state. Other approaches adopted by Indigenous thinkers express different insights and orientations. While braiding is oriented towards critical engagement with other traditions, including the Euro-Modern one, theorists of Indigenous resurgence and refusal argue that sociocultural revitalisation sometimes necessitates turning away from settler states and safeguarding 'generative' spaces for Indigenous knowledges via strategies of 'withdrawal' (Coulthard 2014; A. Simpson 2014; L. B. Simpson 2017). Instead of seeking to braid perspectives and in refusing to guide others to understand their traditions, Indigenous peoples enact "incommensurability as a mechanism for subverting a game in which settler society, in having Indigenous people translate, casts Indigenous people as having consented to their own oppression" (Meissner 2023, 862). This speaks to the importance of supplementing braiding with an approach that is more disruptive of the comfort and certainties of Euro-Modernity that risk undermining the work of braiding. While comparative engagements across traditions may lead to new insights for all, they must must also be thought in ways that call for greater surrender of epistemic authority and territory specifically from those whose home tradition has occupied a near global hegemonic position on a highly asymmetrical epistemic landscape for most of the past 500 years.

Comparative engagements across traditions may be thought of as a desirable and interesting approach to broaden perspectives. We suggest, however, that the Anthropocene forces a reckoning with the routinised conduct of intellectual labor just described and the practiced inability to dialogue with one another (both within academic circles and in the wider public sphere). Indeed, 'we' ('humans') share a world–or at least a 'planet,' if we adopt a more pluriversal ontology and related perspectives (Escobar 2020; Lugones 1987; Bowman 2020). And this shared condition overpowers the most recalcitrant disinterest in discussing this fact with one another, even within the bounds of our 'home' traditions. What happens when this increasingly fragmented, mutually uncomprehending world – or world of many worlds – finds itself thrown together even more intimately by the upheavals of climate catastrophe?

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[12] On vicious epistemic sedimentation, see: (Meissner and Huebner 2022; Whyte 2018).

How do we cultivate more compassionate responses to losing our world, or having to share our displacement with other climate refugees, both humans and other-than-human?

It could be argued that the gesture of epistemic 'surrender' and fidelity to cooperative discovery is nothing more than a rehashing of 'problematization' and the drive to dissolve obstacles to *un*learning hegemonic modes of thinking. Indeed, many contributions to the literature on comparative thought already seek to identify and address challenges to dialogues across traditions and to genuine understanding. These challenges range from issues of incommensurability that prevent understanding or at least understanding without guidance from those who inhibit a different world (Meissner 2023) to issues of epistemic appropriation and exploitation (E. Davis 2018; Bowman 2020), passing by the re-consolidation of dominant traditions we ourselves worry about.[13] It is obviously impossible for us to do justice to all of these approaches and to the significant problems of, and obstacles to, cross-cultural dialogues they identify. Our aim is not to pursue an exhaustive critique, or suggest our current methodology is inherently superior. Although we prefer not to adopt the 'toolkit' analogy, we encourage experimentation in approaching any model of intellectual practice and we suggest braiding and belaying offer such avenues.

As a model for concertedly engaging in a joint intellectual practice, belaying tries to accommodate the very real potential of persistent epistemological and moral sedimentation and obstacles. It is therefore suited to political circumstances in which historical perception (i.e. that one is living at the end of the world or the dawning of a new beginning) determines one's political outlook as much as any ideology. As cooperative practices, braiding and belaying both seek to facilitate reciprocal trust and respect against a cultural backdrop of fragmentation and insurmountable disagreements. It is a model that reflects what we foresee as a political world 'thrown together,' per which agents must find a way to work together despite no shared political philosophy or cosmology. It will become increasingly (desperately) necessary to work with people we cannot otherwise agree with (and may only barely tolerate). What follows are some suggestive examples that will help to concretise these metaphors further.

(3) 'Belaying the Inevitable'

Belaying expresses an understanding and extension of our own practice of intellectual engagement across tradition, which we have been developing over the last five years and which we suggest holds significance in the context of the Anthropocene. We offer this account not as an authoritative final statement or as a complete guide for others, but as an contribution to an ongoing conversation and as an incitement to reflect on what it means to conduct intellectual inquiry otherwise, in collaborative ways that unsettle the sedimented resistances of traditions, especially the Euro-Modern ones, while nevertheless acknowledging the richness and insights of all traditions. We believe it will be instructive to how others approach collaborative intellectual labor.

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[13] See also Brian Burkhart (2020) on the settler guardianship principle.

In practice, philosophical 'belaying' entails several stages by which to ascend a shared obstacle, like the boulder of the Anthropocene.. To begin with, there is the primary motivation to change dominant, largely univocal, especially Euro-Modern, intellectual practices. It seems folly to persist in pedagogical and philosophical patterns if these have as conditions of possibility the social and ecological structures of the Holocene. Nothing is accomplished by refusing to envision intellectual practices that are otherwise, except insisting that human lifeways float free from their historical and natural circumstances. Even if we admit some degree of scepticism about the claim that the world is now irrevocably changed, we suggest that we have ample other good reasons (The Red Nation 2021; Alook et al. 2023) to transform Euro-Modern patterns of human life. Furthermore, it is unclear that it is in fact less 'realistic' to conduct philosophical investigations and critiques in a manner that presupposes 'posterity' will still be around to understand and appreciate the results.

A key methodological proviso for both philosophical braiding and belaying is indeed the need to yield epistemic space: received ways of thinking, including their associated means of reproduction and dissemination, must become unsettled, to different degrees. As we already noted, a key worry we share is that too often, well-intentioned overtures towards engaging with 'ordinary' agents and cultivating meaningful interactions with neglected or suppressed viewpoints and traditions, ends up further entrenching the dominant tradition's appreciation of its own reflexivity and adaptability. A case in point: 'Grounded normativity' is a concept introduced by Glen Coulthard (2014) and further discussed with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, expressing a commitment to cultivating equitable relations with all those (both human and Other-than-human) we find ourselves connected to by virtue of proximity or connected interest—it is a profoundly rooted, embodied, and social mode of engagement 'in' and 'of' the Land (Coulthard and Simpson 2016). It is a concept deeply associated with Indigenous land-based onto-epistemologies (Watts 2013; Burkhart 2019; 2020). The concept has since received increasing attention among Anglophone normative political theorists, but in ways that seem sometimes to come perilously close to the appropriative 'settler philosophical guardianship' denounced by Burkhart (2020) through which Indigenous perspectives are read through dominant Euro-Modern perspectives in ways that often distort them, make them supposedly intelligible, and that defuse their disruptive potential.Our claim is that it is not sufficient to cite and attribute Grounded Normative Theory to Coulthard and Simpson (Ackerly et al. 2021), for instance, if this is only to serve the diagnostic and recursive qualities of the predominant epistemic culture's philosophical apparatus.

The postulating of real or imagined Indigenous perspectives as the basis from which Western thinking can afford self-critique is not new, and can be traced at least as far back as the Renaissance (Graeber and Wengrow 2021, chap. 2). So the difficulty for any respectful engagement across traditions is not merely the elusiveness of 'authentic' representatives of each tradition, but also the asymmetrical nature of the engagement itself. In pursuit of more richly textured anecdotes of the behaviours being observed, catalogued, and critiqued, there is an unacknowledged assumption that Western normative political theory can 'progress' by perfecting the absorption and systematisation of an ever-widening array of beliefs and practices. Grounded Normative Theory as articulated by Indigenous theorists can surely

inform the work of other, non-Indigenous theorists, but the onto-epistemologies from which it originates cannot be defused – they call into question the very presumption, shared by much Euro-Modern political theories, that they can float free, not just from concrete struggles, but from the land itself, to use Burkhart's formulation (2019; 2020). As we see it, engaging with other traditions should not be a way of progressing by incorporating their perspectives; it should instead require us to become vulnerable, to accept that we may have to relinquish certainty, completeness and coherence, and to accept the disorienting discomfort of profound alterity and irreconcilable differences. This is what motivates philosophical braiding and belaying to diverge from 'blending' approaches like 'GNT': in braiding, the dominant epistemological tradition is positioned as a collaborative participant and guest to the Indigenous traditions being engaged with. Investigations inevitably raise the question of why 'we' (as practitioners of Euro-Modern philosophical methods) persist in conducting our teaching and research in the manner that we do—thus opening the possibility of discovering unacknowledged and potentially unnecessary strictures to be 'unlearned' through further creative and critical engagements. If warranted, a participant raised in one tradition may try to go further by adopting the discursive pathways of one's partner.

Having established the primary motivation and a key methodological proviso of belaying, we immediately run into a potential problem: the issue of incommensurability. As Shelbi Meissner (2023, 850) explains, words and concepts in Indigenous languages that cannot be perfectly translated are often seen as revealing of deeper incommensurabilities between Indigenous and Euro-Modern lifeways and lifewords. Meissner explores, with the help of a metaphor of canoe navigation, different forms of incommensurability. The first is "impassable," (p. 850) it cannot be navigated and there is no path from one world to the other. As Meissner explains: 'one cannot, no matter how well-intentioned they may be, travel into Indigenous spaces and epistemologies to "understand them better," if the traveler comes sailing with the trappings of dominant discourse' (p. 861). The second is a "strategic impassable incommensurability," (p. 850) which is the active refusal to provide access to one's world, which we noted earlier. The third is an "incommensurability with technical passage," (p. 850) which requires "expert guidance" (p. 862) to be crossed.

The issue articulated here is that traditions different from our own may not be intelligible to us and may not be accessible without significant losses. Furthermore, the process of understanding them cannot be done from within the confines of our own tradition, lifeways and practices: a tradition and a lifeway may need to be inhabited to be properly understood (Lugones 1987). What Meissner's contributions makes obvious, is that the prospects for braiding and belaying are dependent on traditions being intelligible for outsiders and on there being a navigable passage between worlds.

Meissner relies on the metaphor of navigation where the Indigenous partner is the only one to know the technical passage, and who must then guide their non-Indigenous partner (Meissner 2023, 863). To return to our own metaphor of belaying, this could be represented as being guided up the mountain by a Sherpa. In this case, there is indeed a significant relationship being enacted and it may even be mutually beneficial in some ways, but it is not the type of relationship and activity we are seeking to emphasize. Too much is taken for granted in the

supreme yet also endlessly repeated and idle achievement of surmounting Everest (in the purported words of George Mallory on his third and fatal attempt) "Because it's there." With belaying, both parties are working together and relying on their partner at different moments and in different ways–the climber does not 'lead' the belayer, but takes direction and pace from below. In philosophical belaying, the point of engagement is not to guide our partner into our world so that they may understand our tradition from within; it is to move together against a shared obstacle by assisting one another from our own vantage point and in ways that may require us to change some of our anchors. In that sense, while we acknowledge the potential resonances with work on incommensurability, we are not trying to cross the gap and enter a world, but enable ourselves to hear and take direction even when we cannot 'see' what the belayer is seeing. If traditions are framed as fundamentally and metaphysically unintelligible for outsiders, it is unclear how we can even establish the fact of 'worlds' or perceive any signals as originating from within. As we see it, braiding and belaying do not presume full transparency between traditions; but nor do we think this is necessary for ongoing endeavours founded on a social relation rather than discursive recognition or agreement. Working 'blindly' through occasional, trusting collaborations may even result in unexpected crossings past seemingly incommensurable gaps.

We can now return to belaying as such as enacted by two partners. The 'belayer' deploys friction and tension instead of pure force to prevent the 'climber' from unexpected collapses and falls that risk pulling both partners down together. The 'climber' establishes 'anchoring' points (of varying degrees of stability) in the initial ascent. 'Hitches' are used to link ropes in order to scale heights beyond the length of a single rope. The 'belayer' and the 'climber' must switch roles in 'lead climbing' periodically (particularly when climbing formidable obstacles like mountains). For each writing partner, there is the challenge not only of relying upon points of anchoring (which may prove unstable) but also the responsiveness of the other to allow 'slack' when taking up a lead (including the use/misuse of sources and traditions) but also to tighten and pull back on the rope when the lead climber has gone 'too far' (this is attested in the secondary meaning of 'belaying,' which is used in the imperative to 'cancel' a decision with immediate effect).

The task of transforming intellectual practices in the Anthropocene inevitably reflects the growing prevalence of climate-driven dispossession and displacement (Vince 2022). There will be many kinds of loss suffered in the near future. Without abandoning ourselves in defeat, we can cultivate a willingness to unsettle home traditions and to countermand the impulse to 'preserve a way of life' at any cost (Sam Moore and Roberts 2022). Having said this, we readily acknowledge, as we have already done, that the landscape of coloniality is highly asymmetrical. In the case of many Indigenous traditions, the emphasis cannot and should not be placed on forsaking their traditions, but on resurgence and revitalization. The need to relent is primarily placed on the hegemonic tradition. Still, in the face of the incipient ground shifting transformations of the Anthropocene, being able to expand one's intellectual repertoire beyond the grooves of one's tradition seems particularly important, even for those whose traditions have been historically and ongoingly marginalized. The point here is to remain aware and to properly account for past and ongoing asymmetries.

The task of unsettling one's tradition becomes considerably less onerous when we find others with whom to think through and across traditions. But for this collaboration with others to be effective, not only must the partner be epistemically humble, they must also be willing to surrender themselves to their partner. Epistemic 'surrender' is indeed a more radical mode of epistemic 'humility,' but this should not be confused with nihilistic surrender. At minimum, epistemic surrender entails the suspension of any fidelity to established schools of thought and their attendant commitments. To take an example, Frankfurt School Critical theory resembles most other branches of the Western philosophical family insofar as it maintains a line of continuity between successive 'generations,' even where this entails a critical adjustment of research priorities and normative frameworks. Philosophical belaying may draw from this tradition (e.g. to see whether it is still fruitful to build upon Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of Enlightenment domination of nature; or Marcuse's description of 'surplus' repression of desire; or Habermas' mapping of universal pragmatics) but there is no investment in recreating or preserving those systems of thought. In belaying with a partner, one may have to decenter Adorno and Horkheimer's insights and focus instead on the related but distinctive insights offered by various Indigenous authors about the domination of nature. The aim is not to decide whether one tradition or the other is more indispensable, but rather to cultivate an ability to take direction and navigation from outside our normal purview; to navigate a shared challenge through a different route. Furthermore, the structure of partnership in belaying encourages the 'handing off' of canonical figures within one's tradition, should one's partner request their assistance to reach the next stage. In this way, belaying admits a certain degree of amateurism, with each partner testing out aspects of one another's home tradition to see where it may lead.

Importantly, this testing does not proceed without continual guidance and communication (vital for both metaphorical and non-metaphorical 'belaying'): each partner must establish between them a clear and concise set of commands to address sudden changes during the climb; discussion does not wait for a completed draft but continues throughout the process of composition. Many things that 'happens' during philosophical 'belaying' do not end up on the page, because the process of philosophical communication is produced through unexpected and extraneous circumstances as much as it is by a set outline. Now, this is common to many forms of intellectual collaboration and co-authoring, but what seems to be distinctive with belaying are three things: the distinctively tentative and exploratory nature of the engagement across traditions; the fact that this engagement in itself is more central to the practice than the production of a deliverable; and the fact that the need for such engagement is often driven by external circumstances – as we have argued, in the case of the Anthropocene, it is the collapsing of distinct worlds through literal ground shifting dynamics. In leaving behind beliefs to which we are accustomed, 'belaying' tries to avoid the traps of epistemic 'world travelling' or 'tourism' (Bowman 2020) , and foregrounds the collaborative relationship itself (learning 'with' rather than learning 'about'). Through ongoing dialogue and composition, there is greater scope for 'live' debate and questioning than there would be if inquiry were restricted to staking one's claim and awaiting eventual feedback from reviewers and readers. This encompasses foundational questions about the topic at hand,

whether, for instance, dialectical materialism and Marxist ecology are even necessary to anchor political agency in the Anthropocene.

To make concrete the process of belaying, let us now turn to one telling example how this might unfold. The first moment consists, in the space of dialogue with one's partner, to encounter and recognize resonances across traditions. Thus, one takes the figuration of ancient Cynicism and engages the persona of the Trickster from North American Indigenous thought. Diogenes of Sinope's notoriously 'dog-like' (*kynikos*) contrarianism denigrates elite discourse and disparages societal convention (Mazella 2007; Branham 1996). Cynical speech arises where words fail, when enlightened principles no longer have meaningful impact, and even serve to obfuscate injustice. In this way, Cynicism suggests potential points of contact with Indigenous personifications of the Trickster, including the Lakota Spider Iktomi (Burkhart 2019), and the Ojibwe shapeshifter Nanabozho (Sylvia Moore 2017). Both the Cynic and the Trickster share a predilection for subversive language games, the unrestrained pursuit of bodily pleasures, and the breaking of social norms. Both the Cynic and the Indigenous trickster question the value of human civilization against the interests of nonhuman beings. But the goal here is not to homogenise and equate these personas. By respecting the independent authority of the Trickster and elevating points of friction, we initiate a deeper questioning of the self-understanding of (Western) Cynicism and the range of our intellectual practices, including the 'historical' (versus mythopoetic or divine) status of figures like Diogenes; and the elevation of certain 'fictive practices' (Platonic dialogues, thought experiments) above 'fantastical' narratives like creation stories. Here we can draw inspiration from Brian Burkhart, who develops an alternative philosophical methodology from the workings of the Spider Trickster, using epistemic medicine to help "get out of the web of your own making," (2019, xxiii) confronting local and specific obstacles to moral-political agency, as well as obstacles to Indigenous knowledge recovery and production. Through creative and respectful engagement, we illuminate philosophical incompatibilities while also becoming attuned to dissonances within 'our' traditions and intellectual practices, thereby increasing the potential for mutual self-transformation.

Conclusion:

Although they express suspicions about any attempt to draw grand narratives about the significance of the Anthropocene, Elisa Randazzo and Hannah Richter still perceive a growing appreciation of how "alterity and situatedness are the very conditions of knowing and conceptualizing for all and where meaning and value are decided locally and continuously" (Randazzo and Richter 2024, 91). In a similar vein, braiding and belaying, as we conceive them, aim to be primarily epistemologically-transformative actions rather than consciousness-raising. We see the problem of epistemological asymmetry as a significant obstacle to successfully contending with the contingencies unleashed by the Anthropocene. The sedimented authority of the Western tradition is the seemingly immovable object facing the unstoppable force of the Anthropocene. To genuinely change our way of being and knowing would seem to require learning to let go of this weight, and rethink the roles of

being inheritors and curators of this tradition. It means learning to engage in intellectual labor differently, in ways that allow us to escape the grooves of our own traditions. We suggested both braiding and belaying as complementary approaches to comparative engagements across traditions.

Philosophical braiding expresses a need to engage with others, to learn from them and to let them learn from us–with a self-consciously humble disposition that recognizes the authority of alternative contexts, traditions and lifeworlds, and foregoes any pretension of a complete normative assessment of the world. This orientation could inform any constellation of views: for example, putting contemporary Canadian Indigenous political resurgence into braided dialogue with the historical resistance struggles of Nelson Mandela and the ANC. It could be used to explore resonances and potential dissonances between North American Indigenous relational worldviews and African conceptions of Ubuntu. It could be used to consider different insights about the good life, *mino bimaadiziwin, buen vivir, and sumak kawsay*. Such engagements do not seek normative judgements about right and wrong conduct, but rather draw out questions about 'why' something was conducted 'that way,' why a view is held, and how differently it informs conduct. Beyond simply describing the differences between these contexts, braiding serves to valorise the decisions and values that produced those differences and to recognize the inherent worth of other traditions, while seeking productive engagements. Disagreements and differences are treated as disclosive possibilities that do not need to be reconciled with preferred practices of one's home tradition, although they may reveal considerations and ways of acting and thinking otherwise that should be pursued and that may have been more difficult to perceive had we remained within the bounds of our own tradition.

Both belaying and braiding reject any pretension to endorsing traditions or systems of thought as inherently superior or worth retaining in their entirety, unto the ages of ages. Our hope is that engagements across traditions will be productive of insights that have been hidden by hidebound tradition. Belaying is more dynamic in seeking cooperative experimentation, while braiding foregrounds the work of the individual in drawing critical comparisons and soliciting cooperation iteratively, through proposals, feedback and counter-proposals. Belaying is also inherently processual and relational; written outputs are a secondary (and welcome) concern; braiding retains the active concern for producing the comparative braid. Whereas braiding facilitates deeper epistemic humility between traditions, belaying takes the form of (temporary) epistemic surrender, relying on the integrity of the other's sociocultural anchor to reach a height otherwise inaccessible through one tradition alone. Hence the importance of interpersonal trust and cooperation rather than the free-standing integrity of a normative-discursive 'apparatus.'

What matters with braiding and belaying is the potential to change the practice of intellectual investigation in a way that speaks to the existential uncertainty which fretfully pulls at the fraying edges of our social fabric. While there is much to be gained through normative clarity and critical self-reflection, what remains paramount in belaying is the capacity to reach out, in sorrow, helplessness, and loss to solicit genuine intellectual cooperation through writing and discussion, through a braided weaving and unweaving–rather than consigning oneself to

isolated reflection against clouded mirrors of texts. Whether one chooses to work within one's home tradition or in dialogue with other traditions, we encourage leaving aside concerns about fidelity, systematicity, and coherence, and to find orientation in ecological relevance and mutual resilience. The operative question remains: what and who can we rely upon as the world we know shifts and moves away from us?

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